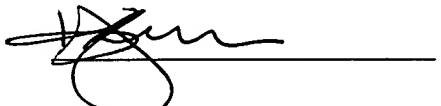
The Action maintains that the application contains claims directed to two patentably distinct inventions: Group I (claims 1-5) and Group II (claims 6-37). Applicants hereby elect the claims of Group I (claims 1-5 and 38-53) for prosecution in this application. Applicants make this election with traverse, and without prejudice to the presentation of the claims of Group II in later applications. Applicants' Assignee believes, however, that examination of elected Group I will necessarily require the same field of search necessary for examination of Group II. The presence of both inventions in a single application therefore imposes no undue burden on the Examiner, and restriction for examination purposes is improper. Withdrawal of the restriction requirement and examination of all of the claims is respectfully requested.

PETITION FOR TWO-MONTH TIME EXTENSION

To the extent necessary, under 37 C.F.R. § 1.136(a) (1998) assignee hereby petitions that the period for responding to the Action mailed on October 30, 2002 be extended for two months, up to and including January 30, 2003. Enclosed is a check in the amount of $410 to cover the appropriate fee for this extension under 37 C.F.R. § 1.17.

Respectfully submitted,



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Marked-up copy of amended claims pursuant to 37 C.F.R. § 1.121(c)

1. (Amended) An improved method for molding three-dimensional products from a mass of foodstuff which is suitable for human consumption, comprising the steps of:

a. filling [a] at least one mold cavity having [a filling] at least one opening with a portion of a mass of foodstuff via the at least one opening, wherein a filling pressure is exerted on the mass for a filling period;

b. closing the at least one opening of the mold cavity;

c. retaining the mass in the closed mold cavity for a fixing period, wherein for at least a portion of the fixing period a fixing pressure is exerted on the mass to form a molded product; and

d. opening the mold cavity and removing the molded product.

Please add the following new claims:

-- 38. (New) The method of claim 1, wherein the method further comprises providing a drum moving along a path and comprising a drum wall, wherein the at least one mold cavity is positioned in the drum wall. --

-- 39. (New) The method of claim 1, wherein filling the at least one mold cavity further comprises providing at least one mass-feed component adapted to be positioned adjacent the drum for feeding mass into the at least one mold cavity. --

-- 40. (New) The method of claim 1, wherein removing the molded product comprises using separating means to remove the molded product projecting from the mold cavity. --

-- 41. (New) The method of claim 39, wherein the drum further comprises a first surface and a second surface, wherein the at least one opening comprises a first opening positioned along the

first surface of the drum and a second opening positioned along the second surface of the drum. --

-- 42. (New) The method of claim 41, wherein the mass-feed component comprises at least one compartment having a feed opening adjacent the first opening of the mold cavity to feed mass into the mold cavity and wherein closing the at least one opening of the mold cavity comprises providing a closure component for at least temporarily closing the second opening of the mold cavity. --

-- 43. (New) The method of claim 38, wherein closing the at least one opening of the mold cavity comprises positioning a belt adjacent at least a portion of the drum wall to at least temporarily close the at least one mold cavity. –

-- 44. (New) The method of claim 43, further comprising applying pressure to at least a portion of the belt so that the belt bears against at least a portion of the drum wall. --

--45. (New) The method of claim 1, further comprising positioning a first film in at least a portion of the at least one mold cavity before mass is fed into the cavity. --

-- 46. (New) The method of claim 45, further comprising positioning a second film over the mass which is fed into the at least one mold cavity. --

-- 47. (New) The method of claim 1, further comprising positioning a first film to at least partially cover the at least one opening of the at least one mold cavity after mass is fed into the at least one mold cavity. --

-- 48. (New) The method of claim 1, further comprising subjecting the mass to a pressurized medium to exert a fixing pressure on the mass enclosed in the at least one mold cavity. --

-- 49. (New) The method of claim 1, wherein the at least one mold cavity comprises an adjustable base and has a cavity volume that varies depending on the position of the base, wherein the mold cavity has:

i. a first volume when the base is positioned in a first position before mass is fed into the cavity;

ii. a second volume when the base is positioned in a second position after mass has been fed into the cavity but before the cavity opening has been closed; and

iii. a third volume when the base is positioned in a third position after the cavity opening has been closed,

wherein the second volume is greater than the first volume and the third volume. --

-- 50. (New) The method of claim 1, wherein the at least one mold cavity is at least partially lined with a substantially flexible membrane and wherein removing the molded product comprises applying a pressurized medium to the flexible membrane to eject the molded product from the at least one mold cavity. --

-- 51. (New) The method of claim 1, wherein removing the molded product comprises subjecting the mass to a pressurized medium to eject the molded product from the at least one mold cavity. --

-- 52. (New) The method of claim 39, wherein the at least one mass-feed component comprises a first mass-feed component positioned along the path for feeding a first mass into the at least one mold cavity and a second mass-feed component positioned along the path downstream of the first mass-feed component for feeding a second mass into the at least one mold cavity. --

-- 53. (New) The method of claim 52, further comprising forming a hollow in the mass which has been fed into the mold cavity by the first mass-feed component and introducing a filling into the hollow before feeding the second mass into the at least one mold cavity. --